Met Office

December 2014

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

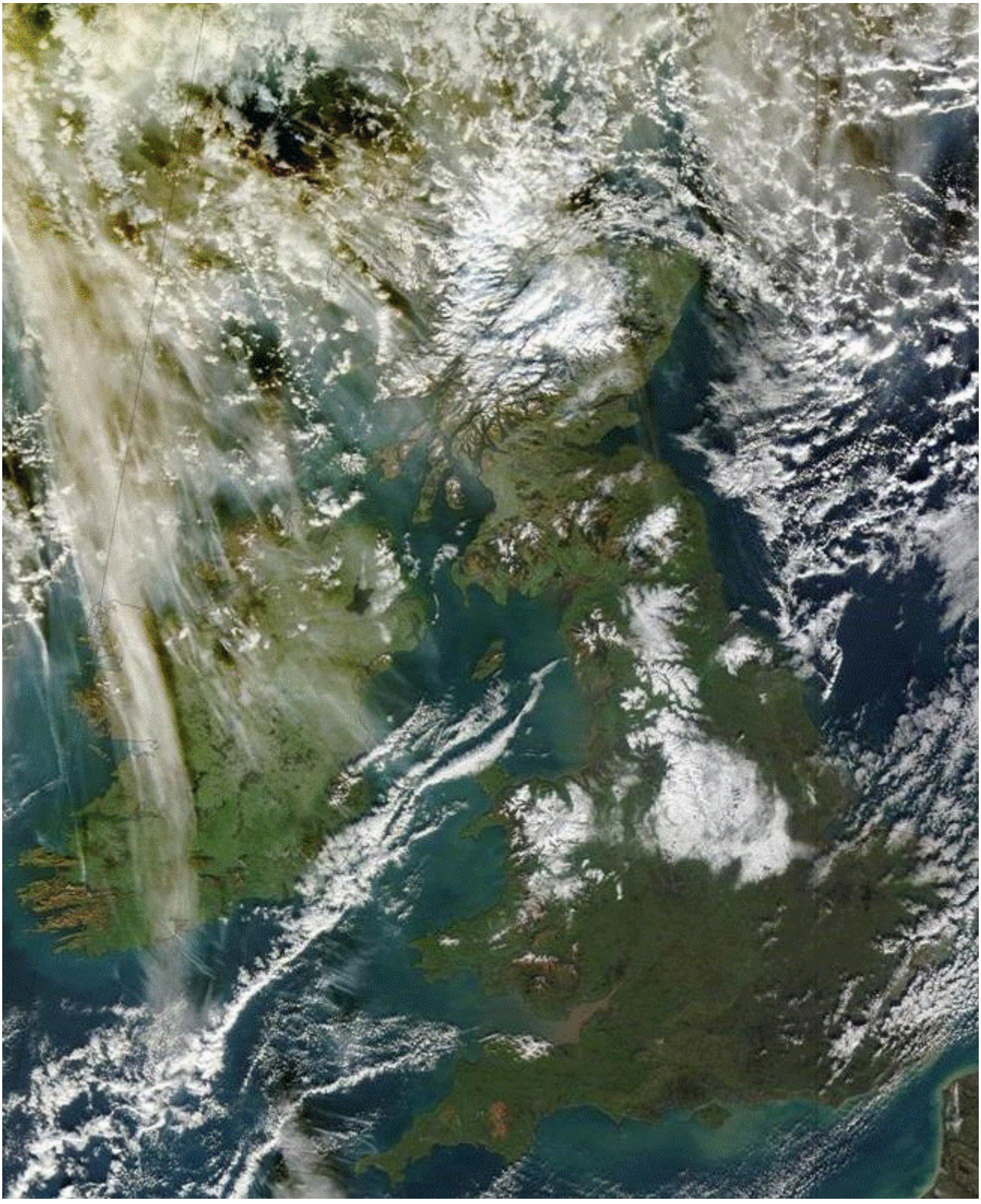
UK overview

For much of December the weather was from the west, giving milder, wetter spells, particularly in the north and west, interspersed by drier brighter days. The moist, mild Atlantic air gave some notably high temperatures but there were colder spells too from 3rd to 14th and more especially from 27th to 30th. Although it was unsettled for much of the time, rainfall totals were mostly below average in the south and east and in these areas there was plenty of winter sunshine. On Boxing Day there were some snowfalls at lower elevations in Wales in northern England, followed by a notable anticyclonic spell toward the New Year. This brought clear skies, hard frosts and the lowest UK temperature readings of the calendar year.

The UK mean temperature was 4.4 °C, which is 0.5 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average. Rainfall was above average in the north and west, with approaching double the long-term average in parts of western and northern Scotland, but many east-coast counties and most of southern England were drier, giving an overall UK rainfall total of 110% of average. Sunshine was well above normal in most places, especially central and eastern areas. The UK received 140% of average sunshine hours, and it was the second sunniest December in a series from 1929.

A maximum temperature of 16.0 °C was recorded at Prestatyn (Denbighshire) on the 22nd. A minimum temperature of -9.0 °C was recorded at Cromdale (Moray) on the 27th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 23rd, 145.2 mm of rain fell at Honister Pass (Cumbria). A wind gust of 90 mph was recorded at Needles (Isle of Wight) on the 12th. A snow depth of 22cm was recorded at Middleton (Derbyshire) at 0900 GMT on the 27th.

The following image from the Nasa Terra satellite shows snow cover across the UK at 1100 GMT 28 December 2014



Weather impacts

After a quiet start to the month, there were various impacts from fog, icy roads and strong winds which would be expected at this time of year. There was also some heavy rain and snowfalls at times.

Heavy rain affected western Scotland on the 6th and again 9th December. A vigorous Atlantic low pressure system brought wind gusts of up to 70 mph across the north of the UK on 10th December. There was widespread transport disruption in Scotland and around 30,000 homes without power in the Western Isles.

Southern and central Scotland were then affected by snowfalls on the 12th, even to lower levels, while heavy rain again affected western Scotland on the 21st.

On Boxing Day an area of precipitation turned to snow as it moved north over the Midlands, with lying snow across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and the Pennines. After this, cold air pushed south across the whole country as an area of high pressure developed, giving icy roads and making conditions difficult for motorists.

After the high pressure system moved away, milder air pushed in, giving another wet day over western Scotland on the 31st.

England diary of highlights

The month comprised alternating spells of colder and milder weather, with frosts common between 3rd and 8th and again between 26th and 30th but some very mild weather at other times. A vigorous depression brought stormy weather around 9th to 12th, after which the weather was milder until Christmas. The last few days were mostly clear, sunny and frosty.

The mean temperature for the month was 0.7 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall overall was 86% of average; the driest areas were across north-east England and toward the south coast, with less than 50% in a few places. Sunshine amounts were well above average almost everywhere, especially in central and eastern England with well over 150% of average sunshine widely. It was second sunniest December for England in a series from 1929.

1st to 8th:

The 1st was dry, with the best of any sunshine in eastern areas. The 2nd was cloudy, with patchy rain in the south-east. A cold start on the 3rd with a widespread frost mainly in northern areas and temperatures down to -5 ºC, but a pleasant day for many followed albeit with patchy rain for the south-east. The 4th was generally cloudy again after a frosty start in parts of the north, with patchy rain again for the south-east. A cooler airstream on the 5th brought scattered showers into the north-west. After a widespread frost, the 6th was dry until later when rain reached the far north-west. The 7th was a day of sunshine and scattered showers but cool in a north-west wind. The 8th was generally dry and bright for most areas, with just a few scattered showers for the Midlands.

9th to 15th:

The 9th began with a widespread frost, temperatures falling to -5.6 ºC at Topcliffe (North Yorkshire), but strong winds and patchy rain spread from the west during the morning; a gust of 70 mph was recorded at Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight). The 10th saw sunshine and showers, with winds gusting to around 60 mph in western areas. The 11th was another day of sunshine and showers, with the west seeing the strongest gusts and most frequent showers, and more persistent rain spread eastwards during the afternoon. The 12th started with an area of strong winds and rain spreading across the south, with a gust of 88 mph at Needles Old Battery, although the rain soon cleared to leave a bright day with isolated showers. The 13th was mainly dry and bright but felt cool in a north-west wind. A band of rain and strong winds spread into western areas during the morning of the 14th but this became patchy as it moved slowly east. There were showers for western and some central areas on the 15th, with the east staying mainly dry.

16th to 24th:

The 16th was generally dry and bright with only isolated showers in the north-west, but rain spread into western areas during the evening. This rain cleared during the morning of the 17th, then it was bright and breezy until more rain spread into the south-west in late afternoon. The 18th was wet in the north but other areas were mainly dry and cloudy. There were scattered showers in the north on the 19th with other areas generally dry but breezy. Any showers were more isolated in the north on the 20th as pressure built from the south. The 21st saw winds increasing, with rain spreading into the south-west during the afternoon, but it was mild with temperatures reaching 14 ºC in the London area. Northern areas had rain on the 22nd with the south mainly dry, and remaining mild in strong westerly winds. The rain slowly edged south on the 23rd with some

heavy bursts in the north-west and Stonyhurst (Lancashire) recording 36 mm, while southern areas were breezy and mild again. There were scattered showers in the north on the 24th with southern areas mainly dry and bright.

25th to 31st:

Western and central areas had scattered showers on the 25th, while the east was mainly dry and bright. After a fine start on the 26th with a widespread frost, a deep area of low pressure brought rain and strong coastal winds to western areas in the morning. The rain reached the east by evening, turning to snow over some central areas overnight into the 27th. A depth of 22 cm was recorded at Middleton (Derbyshire), although the snowfall cleared to leave a cold but showery day. After a widespread frost on the morning of the 28th, it was dry, sunny and cold. The 29th again started with a frost, temperatures falling to -7.6 ºC at Benson (Oxfordshire); it was a dry, sunny but cold day. Early on the 30th temperatures again fell to -7 ºC in the Thames Valley area, but a dry and sunny day followed. The 31st started cold again in the south but cloud increased in northern areas with rain reaching the north-west by the afternoon.

Wales diary of highlights

The month overall saw mostly unsettled weather with rain or showers for most of the time, and some snow across higher ground. It was also windy at times, particularly around the 10th. Despite a cold spell toward month-end, overall temperatures were relatively mild.

The mean temperature for the month was 0.7 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall totals overall were just below normal at 96% of average, with the driest areas in the south. It was a sunny month in the south, with 125% of the long-term average sunshine hours for Wales overall.

1st to 4th:

The 1st was mainly cloudy but dry, with just patchy light rain reaching the west coast by late evening. Rain and showers were confined to the west on the 2nd and it was dry elsewhere. After a cold start on the 3rd, with -5.1 °C recorded at Sennybridge (Powys), it was dry and fine, with some sunshine in the south. The 4th was cold too, and generally cloudy, but dry apart from some light, patchy rain in the morning.

5th to 18th:

The 5th and 6th had sunshine and showers. Rain through the early hours of the 7th cleared to the east by mid-morning, followed by showers for the rest of the day. The 8th had some sunshine, but with showers which were mainly inland and over the north. Cloudy on the 9th, and windy, reaching gale force along the coasts, with some rain by late afternoon. Frequent showers on the 10th, with a strong to gale-force wind which slowly moderated through the day. Still windy on the 11th with frequent showers, merging into longer spells of rain later. Rain in the early hours of the 12th broke up into less frequent showers during the day with a little sunshine. Cold overnight into the 13th, with -3.5 °C recorded at Sennybridge, then mainly dry with some sunshine. The 14th was dull, with showers merging into more organised rain for a time, followed by frequent showers again. Heavy rain passed quickly west to east before dawn on the 15th to leave a cloudy and showery day. The 16th started with some showers then a band of rain, at times heavy, crossed the country in the latter part of the day. It was dull with spells of rain throughout the day on the 17th. A dull and wet day again on the 18th, with the heaviest rain in the north-west where Capel Curig (Gwynedd) recorded 40 mm.

19th to 22nd:

The 19th was showery in the west but drier and brighter further east. A ridge of high pressure edged in from the south on the 20th, giving a mainly dry and bright day. The 21st was breezy but mild, with temperatures reaching 13.2 °C at Rhyl (Denbighshire). The north-west saw some rain on the 22nd with other areas mainly dry, bright and mild with temperatures at Prestatyn (Denbighshire) reaching 16.0 °C.

23rd to 27th:

The 23rd was overcast with rain for much of the country. Mainly dry but cloudy on the 24th with the best of any brightness in the east. The 25th was mainly dry with some sunshine and isolated showers. A band of rain, turning readily to snow over higher ground, spread across between mid-morning and late afternoon on the 26th. The 27th was mainly cloudy with frequent showers.

28th to 31st:

High pressure dominated on the 28th giving a cold night, with a minimum of -4.1 °C at Trawsgoed (Ceredigion), but it was a dry and sunny day. Very cold overnight into the morning of the 29th with -6.7 °C recorded at Pembrey Sands (Carmarthenshire), then dry with some sunshine. The 30th was cold again in the early hours with -5.6 °C recorded at Usk (Monmouthshire), then was dry with sunny intervals. Cloud and patchy rain edged into the west from late morning on the 31st while the east remained mainly dry.

Scotland diary of highlights

The month was largely unsettled, with some heavy rain at times, especially in the west. A vigorous low pressure system brought strong winds from 10th to 12th, and there were significant snowfalls across the Scottish mountains. There was a brief spell of colder, more settled weather toward month end.

The mean temperature for the month was 0.3 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall overall was 134% of average, with a contrast between approaching double the long-term average in a few locations in the north and west, but less than half the normal for Aberdeen. Sunshine amounts were 114% of average overall, with eastern areas brightest and least sunshine in the Western Isles.

1st to 8th:

A wet start in the north and west on the 1st as a band of rain moved steadily east across the country, with only the south-east staying mostly dry. The 2nd was dry and bright in the east, but there were scattered showers in the west. Dry and bright in the east with a frosty start on the 3rd but cloudier and milder in the west with scattered coastal showers. The 4th began mostly dry, but became increasingly showery in the west. It was mostly dry and bright in the east on the 5th apart from some rain at first, but much more showery in the west. Rain spread to most areas on the 6th but especially the south. A windy day on the 7th with frequent showers and longer spells of rain, sleet and snow, especially in the west. Very unsettled on the 8th with rain for most areas and occasional sleet or snow on higher ground, but becoming drier and clearer with winds easing later.

9th to 12th:

Rain and gale-force winds for most areas on the 9th as a weather system moved east across the country through the day, with a gust of 76 mph recorded at Edinburgh, Blackford Hill and 53 mm of rain measured at Cluanie Inn (Highland). Another very unsettled day on the 10th with gale or severe gale-force winds, heavy rain and occasional hail and thunder causing travel disruption, especially in the west. Frequent showers and longer spells of rain, sleet and snow for all areas on the 11th. It started wet in the north and west on the 12th, with the rain gradually moving south and east through the day but becoming lighter and more fragmented.

13th to 24th:

A mainly dry but cold day in the east on the 13th but showers in the west became more widespread through the day, merging into longer spells of rain and occasionally sleet or snow. Continuing unsettled, but less cold, on the 14th with rain for most areas. A showery day in the north and west on the 15th but drier in the east. Generally dry during the 16th apart from a few showers in the west, with brighter spells in the east, but a broad area of rain moved into the west later and spread east during the evening and night. The 17th felt quite mild and was mainly dry in the east, but the west had some showers. Rain spread to all areas through the day

on the 18th before clearing to the east and becoming showery. A very showery and windy day on the 19th, with showers falling as sleet and snow in the north and west. More showers to start on the 20th, but they gradually eased off during the day and some areas stayed dry and bright all day especially in the south-east. A dry start in the east on the 21st but heavy rain and strong winds crossed most of the country through the day, reaching the south by evening, with 80.2 mm recorded at Benmore (Argyll). Strong winds again with rain in the south of the country on the 22nd, becoming patchy in the afternoon, and showers in the north-west. Rain in the far south of the country on the 23rd and showery in the north-west. Frequent showers across the country on the 24th turned wintry in many areas.

25th to 31st:

The 25th was another showery day in the west but mainly dry in the east. Mostly dry again in the east on the 26th, with some rain, sleet or snow in the west. After a cold start on the 27th, with temperatures as low as -9.0 ºC at Cromdale (Moray), there were showers for most areas, easing off throughout the day. Mostly dry and cold on the 28th but with some scattered showers. Dry and cold again on the 29th. After patchy rain at first on the 30th it became mostly dry and milder. There was rain in western and central areas during the morning of the 31st but the east remained mainly dry.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Much of the month was unsettled, with some windy spells. However, there were some cold, sunny days too, particularly for a few days toward the end of December.

The mean temperature for the month was 0.1 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall amounts were mostly slightly wetter than normal, giving 127% of the long-term average rainfall overall. However, it was also quite sunny with 119% of average sunshine hours.

1st to 8th:

A dry start on the 1st but rain spread eastwards during the afternoon and evening. A few showers overnight into the 2nd, with a frost in western areas, gave way to a mainly dry and sunny day. Overnight frost for the 3rd and 4th was followed by mainly dry days with variable amounts of cloud. After overnight rain, the 5th was dry and bright. The 6th saw rain at times for most of the day, heaviest in the north, and winds became strong. A steady stream of showers spread in on the strong westerly winds on the 7th, heavy at times especially in the west. Widespread showers continued through the 8th, dying away by evening as winds eased.

9th to 11th:

A band of rain moved through during the afternoon of the 9th, leaving behind colder weather with blustery showers. The showers continued into the 10th, heavy at times, wintry on higher ground and accompanied by lightning in the north, and gusts reached up to 70 mph on coasts. Blustery, wintry showers continued through the 11th, dying out for a time in the afternoon before a period of more general rain extended eastwards.

12th to 24th:

Overnight rain moved away southwards to leave showers, heavy at times, for the 12th. After a few early showers, the 13th was mainly dry. A narrow band of rain on the 14th cleared all areas by midday and was followed by showers and a strong north-west wind. A bright day with scattered showers on the 15th. After a fine start on the 16th, persistent rain moved in to all areas during the afternoon, and it became milder in the south-westerly winds. After a day of scattered showers on the 17th, there was more general rain on the 18th which turned showery from midday onwards. Scattered showers on the 19th and 20th, and at first on the 21st before rain, heavy at times, arrived late in the day. The rain persisted overnight into the 22nd and continued for much of the day, with Castlereagh (County Antrim) recording 42 mm. The rain continued for much of the 23rd too, before easing to the south during the afternoon. The 24th saw sunshine and scattered showers.

25th to 31st:

The 25th was mostly dry and bright, with showers in coastal areas, but cool in a north-west wind. Rain spread into all areas during the morning of the 26th, not clearing until the evening. After an early frost the 27th was a day of sunshine and showers, with some snow over the higher ground. The 28th was dry, cold but sunny after early-morning frost and fog. The 29th started with temperatures falling to below -7 °C in many rural areas, but another dry and sunny day followed. The 30th started with a widespread frost, with Katesbridge (County Down) recording -8.2 °C, although cloud increased during the afternoon. Milder air and freshening winds brought a band of rain from the west during the morning of the 31st which cleared the east by afternoon.

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Met Office